

Knowing of your interest in traditional values, I wanted to bring to your attention President Obama's decision earlier this week to authorize taxpayer funding of controversial research on stem cells produced by destroying human embryos. This decision overturns President Bush's policy that prohibited taxpayer funding for research on new embryonic stem cell lines, while allowing investments in research on other stem cell sources such as bone marrow from adults and the umbilical cords of newborns. Importantly, there have been major breakthroughs using these noncontroversial research methods, including discovering how to produce the same type of stem cells ("pluripotent") that supporters of embryonic stem cell research believe are most promising-without destroying a human embryo.

Like all Americans, I want to find cures for debilitating diseases and tragic medical conditions such as diabetes, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's disease and paralysis, and I fully support federal funding on non-embryo-destructive stem cell research. But I believe it's a false choice to set science against ethics. Indeed, the breakthroughs of the past few years demonstrate that we do not have to sacrifice our most cherished values to achieve progress. Now that we have methods of producing pluripotent stem cells that present no moral dilemma, it is all the more difficult to see why the divisive question of embryonic research should be reopened. I am concerned that President Obama's decision could start our nation down a morally-troubling 'ends justify the means' path whereby the cloning of embryos and other unethical conduct are defended on the grounds that cures are just around the corner. Our nation should not travel down this dangerous path.